



Capitol Comments

Countdown to Sine Die

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As of today, there are 10 days left in the 84th Legislative Session. Tomorrow is the last day for bills to be sent out of House and Senate committees. After that, there will be 3 days for bills to be debated on the House floor. I am optimistic about the progress the Legislature is making this session. Though time is in short supply, both chambers continue to pass solid legislation. For instance, this week the House passed a key pastor protection bill that will solidify our state's stance on protecting religious freedom, Senate Bill 2065.

Floor Action

[Senate Bill 2065](#)

On Thursday the House passed an important pastor protection bill, Senate Bill 2065, filed by Senator Craig Estes. As a proud cosponsor of the bill, I understand the need for protection of religious freedom in our state and nation. If SB 2065 is signed by the Governor, no clergy or minister who refuses to provide services because of a sincerely held religious belief can be held accountable in a civil or criminal suit.

The freedom of religion is guaranteed in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and is an inalienable right that no government, state or federal, should hinder or limit. SB 2065 is a statement to all that Texas will defend its religious leaders and their beliefs from government intervention or legal recourse.



House members gathered in support of Representative Scott Sanford (McKinney) as he lays out SB 2065

[Senate Bill 795](#)

Yesterday saw the passage of a voter fraud prevention bill whose origins stemmed from testimony I heard as a member of the House Committee on Elections during the past interim period. SB 795, filed by Senator Charles Perry, requires the Texas Secretary of State, for purposes of maintaining the statewide voter registration list and preventing duplication of registration in more than one state or jurisdiction, to cooperate with other states and jurisdictions to develop systems to compare voters, voter history, and voter registration lists to identify voters whose addresses have changed. The bill requires such a system to comply with the federal National Voter Registration Act. I'm proud to have voted for legislation that helps preserve the integrity of the voting process.

[Senate Bill 206](#)

On Monday, the House heard the "Sunset" bill for the Department of Family & Protective Services. SB 206 provided for the continuation of DFPS, a crucial agency in the protection of children in our state. As in any case, adjustments needed to be made to help the agency run smoothly and efficiently while helping to protect our most vulnerable population. Among other measures, SB 206:

- Eliminates, clarifies, or streamlines burdensome and prescriptive statutory requirements that affect Child Protective Services' (CPS) ability to do its job.
- Requires CPS to implement an annual business planning process.

- Requires DFPS to develop and maintain a long-range foster care redesign implementation plan to mitigate inherent risks of this outsourcing approach to administering foster care.
- Requires DFPS to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for its prevention and early intervention program.
- Strengthens DFPS' child care licensing enforcement efforts.

Back in the District

Congratulations to Our Graduating Seniors



To celebrate the achievement of our HD 65 students, my office is in the process of sending out a letter to every single graduating senior in the district

Over the next several weeks, many students across our district will celebrate a significant milestone as they receive their diplomas and graduate from high school. I want to extend my sincere congratulations to all our graduating seniors on their accomplishment. An accomplishment such as this deserves to be recognized and celebrated and I hope it will inspire these students to realize their true potential and relentlessly pursue their dreams.

As anyone close to a high school student knows, this important moment could not have been achieved without the hard work of parents, teachers, administrators, mentors, and friends. High school graduation

is a major achievement not only for students but for their communities as well. I wish every student the best of luck in their future endeavors.

Hidden Camera Interviews at the Capitol

You may have heard about a so called "sting" operation going on of so called journalists who are secretly video and audio recording Representatives and Senators in the Capitol and around Austin (they even interrupted one Representative's dinner with his wife and pulled up a chair and began asking questions). While I believe in government transparency, I also believe in transparency in our media. So many things can be manipulated in audio and video recordings that it is impossible to know when something is legitimate. One of these folks stopped me in the lobby outside the House floor and after refusing to tell me who he worked for and whether or not he was recording me, I finally said that I would answer his questions but that I would record him while he was asking me the questions and recording me. A journalist from the Houston Chronicle snapped a picture of this unique interview.



My Bill Update

At this point in session, House bills are working through the Senate and Senate bills are here in the House. Any bills that have not made it to the opposite chamber yet cannot be passed this session. Furthermore, tomorrow, Saturday, May 23rd, is the last day for bills to be voted out of committee. Saturday is the final window for any House bills still in Senate committees or Senate bills still in House committees.

My bills in the Senate:

HB 281- Relating to a limitation on the expansion of the Camelot landfill

House Bill 281 seeks to address the pending expansion of the Camelot landfill between Lewisville and Carrollton. HB 281 provides the municipalities in which landfills are located with a voice when it comes to a permit to expand a landfill that is located within the municipality, but owned by a different

municipality. This unique situation applies only to the aforementioned landfill in the heart of our district. Without intervention, a new permit would allow the Camelot landfill to increase 50% in height, giving Denton County the dubious distinction of having a landfill as the highest point in the county!

Special thanks to Senator Jane Nelson for sponsoring this bill in the Senate, as this is an important issue for our constituents in Lewisville and Carrollton. HB 281 was passed out of committee and sent to the local and uncontested Senate calendar.

HB 20- Relating to the operations of and transportation planning and expenditures by the Texas Department of Transportation and planning organizations.

- Placed on the intent calendar in the Senate

HB 280- Relating to the information required to be posted by the Texas Water Development Board on the board's Internet website regarding the use of the state water implementation fund for Texas

- Has passed both chambers and was sent to the Governor

HB 376- Relating to the additional tax imposed on land appraised for ad valorem tax purposes as open-space land if a change in use of the land occurs.

- Was heard in the Senate Committee on Finance and left pending for further consideration

HB 1286- Relating to the prosecution and punishment of the offense of injury to a child, elderly individual, or disabled individual

- Was passed out of committee and sent to the local and uncontested Senate calendar

HB 1287- Relating to a requirement that each state university's Internet website include a link to certain employment data

- Was passed out of committee and sent to the local and uncontested Senate calendar

HB 2162- Relating to municipal regulation of the use of alarm systems; authorizing a municipal fee

- Has been referred to the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations

HB 2883- Relating to the addition of territory to a crime control and prevention district and to a fire control, prevention, and emergency medical services district

- Was voted favorably out of the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations and placed on the Senate Local and Uncontested Calendar

HB 3167- Relating to the governing bodies of certain local planning organizations

- Was referred to the Senate Committee on Intergovernmental Relations

HB 3750- Relating to interim studies on real property owned by the state.

- Was heard in the Senate Committee on Business and Commerce and left pending for further consideration

HB 1943- Relating to the indexing of correction instruments in a county index to real property records

- The identical Senate companion, SB 584, was passed out of both chambers and sent to the Governor

Senate bills I am sponsoring:

SB 57 (Senator Jane Nelson) - Relating to information collected by a regional toll way authority, regional transportation authority, or coordinated county transportation authority

- Was heard on the House floor on 2nd reading today

Remaining Events and Dates

Graduation Dates in District 65

Carrollton Christian Academy	May 22nd
Creekview High School	June 7th
Harmony School of Innovation	May 30th
Hebron High School	June 6th
iSchool High Lewisville	May 29th
Lewisville High School	June 8th
Marcus High School	June 6th
Newman Smith High School	June 7th
Prestonwood Christian Academy	May 22nd
Prince of Peace Christian School	May 23rd

Final Day to Consider Senate Bills for 2nd Reading

Tuesday, May 26th (134th Day of Session)

- On this Tuesday every bill that has yet to be read twice on the floor will be considered "dead" for this session.

Final Day of Session

Monday, June 1st (140th Day of Session)

- The 84th Session will end when both chambers adjourn "sine die," from the Latin phrase "without day" meaning indefinitely.

Highland Village Business Association Breakfast- Legislative Wrap-Up

8:00 am, Thursday, June 4th

- Come join me at the Highland Village Business Association at the Highland Village Municipal Center to hear a final wrap-up of the 84th Legislative Session and what has been done to benefit businesses in our area!

As always, please stay in touch with me and feel free to drop by my District Office, follow me on Facebook, or find me on the House Website to hear about upcoming events.

Thank you, it is truly an honor and a privilege to serve as your State Representative.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ron', with a stylized, cursive script.

Ron Simmons
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